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Montana basketball team to play Washington State

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FROM: BOB GILLULY
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121658

RELEASE FRIDAY, DEC. 19.

MISSOULA--Marv's Midgets and Cox's Clawless Cagers tangle Friday night in the MSU Fieldhouse, and the battle between Montana and Washington State shapes up as one of the closest encounters in recent years between the two schools.

Both teams have a weak spot. Coach Marv Harshman of WSC has one of the smallest major college teams in the west. And Frosty Cox at Montana is guiding a team that has averaged only 51.6 points per game this season.

Harshman, taking over the Cougar reins this year after 15 successful seasons at Pacific Lutheran, has only one man in the "big" category--6-6 center John Maras. Forward Dick Axelson is 6-3, forward Frank Reed 6-2, guard Jim Ross 5-8 and guard Mert Kennedy 5-11.

Despite the smallness label, the Cougars gave evidence of having a tough defensive club when they stopped Montana State College, 41-34, Monday night at Bozeman.

Tentative Grizzly starters include forwards Darrol Dunham and Terry Screnar, center Marv Suttles, and guards Dan Balko and Vince Ignatowicz. This quint will average about an inch taller than the Cougars.

"With this slight height advantage, we hope to do better work on the boards," Cox commented. He pointed out the fact that Montana has outrebounded only one team this season--Montana State--and that was the closest contest of the year for the Grizzlies.

This is the prime reason why the Silvertips haven't put together a potent scoring machine. They haven't been getting as many shots as the opposition. And

(more)

the Montana shooting percentage is only 27.4 per cent so far, and Cox is the first to admit that this average won't win many games.

Balko and Ignatowicz are holding up their end of the scoring, but Cox hasn't had consistent scoring from his other starters. Optimism prevails, however, since Dunham is beginning to roll after a slow start, and sophomore Screnar came through with a sterling 22-point performance against Idaho Saturday.

This leaves the center spot, which admittedly is a knotty problem. Neither Suttles, Dave Shelby or Duane Ruegsegger has scored consistently all season. Although all three have played good ball on occasion, it's always a tossup as to which will turn in the better game on a given night.

Cox cut his varsity to 11 players Monday, dropping senior Tom McEacheron and sophomores Charles Hood, Steve Kirk and Gary Kanz from the roster.

With freshman cagers home for the holidays, there will be no preliminary Friday. Game time is 8 p.m.

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